

HARNESSING THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH ON  
PURCHASE INTENTION OF COSMETICS BASED ON THE FUNCTIONAL  
ATTITUDE THEORY

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International Business

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Paurav Shukla

Date of Approval: 13.4.2017

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## ABSTRACT OF BACHELOR'S THESIS

<b>Author:</b> Johanna Koponen <b>Title of thesis:</b> Harnessing the impact of electronic word-of-mouth on purchase intention of cosmetics based on the functional attitude theory
<b>Date:</b> 10 April, 2017
<b>Degree:</b> Bachelor of Science in Economics and Business Administration
<b>Supervisor:</b> Paurav Shukla
<b>Objectives:</b> The main objective of this research is to determine the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (reviews on retail sites versus reviews on social media) on purchase intention of cosmetic products. This study also provides a theoretical framework, which is then utilized in researching the differences in significance of the four functional attitudes, by Katz (1960), on purchase intention.  <b>Summary:</b> This research gathered information from earlier literature in the field of electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behavior. Based on the earlier literature, five hypotheses were proposed. A framework was established, combining eWOM and the functional attitude theory, which was then used to guide a research for primary data. The data was gathered through quantitative research in the form of online questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in eight different versions to measure each function in both forms (text-based reflecting reviews in Amazon and visual-based reflecting reviews in social media).  <b>Conclusions:</b> eWOM was found to have a significant impact on purchase intention in the case of visual-based reviews. The two most effective functions mentioned in the review were ego-defensive function and knowledge function.
<b>Key words:</b> consumer behavior, eWOM, purchase intention, cosmetics, functional attitude theory,
<b>Language:</b> English
<b>Grade:</b>

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bachelor's Thesis

### COVER PAGE

TITLE PAGE

ABSTRACT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.2. Research Questions	2
<b>2. LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. Overview of the cosmetic industry	3
2.2. Working definition of eWOM	4
2.2.1. Motives for consumers to engage in eWOM	4
2.2.2. Differences between WOM and eWOM	6
2.2.3. eWOM on Social Media	7
2.2.4. eWOM on retail sites	8
2.3. Social influences	9
2.4. Theoretical background – functional attitudes	10
2.4.1. Utilitarian function	10
2.4.2. Ego-Defensive function	11
2.4.3. Value-Expressive function	12
2.4.4. Knowledge function	13
2.5. Conceptual Framework	13
<b>3. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1. Research Methods and Data Collection	16

3.2.	Questionnaire Design.....	17
3.3.	Sampling.....	19
3.4.	Data Analysis .....	20
3.5.	Ethical issues in research .....	20
4.	FINDINGS .....	21
4.1.	Respondent Profile.....	21
4.2.	Reliability Analysis .....	25
4.3.	Hypothesis Testing.....	26
5.	DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.....	31
5.1.	General Discussion and Analysis of the Findings .....	31
5.1.1.	Comparing visual and textual reviews.....	32
5.1.2.	Analysis of Functional Attitudes .....	33
5.2.	Limitations of the Study.....	35
6.	CONCLUSIONS.....	37
6.1.	Main Findings.....	37
6.2.	Implications for International Business .....	38
6.3.	Suggestions for further research.....	39
	References .....	40

## APPENDICES

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background information**

Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) – the process of conveying information between two individuals, often acquaintances, has been known to play an important role in customer purchase intention making for a long time (e.g. Bailey 2005; Libai et al. 2010; Blazevik et al. 2013). Prior studies have found WOM to be more trustworthy than direct marketing, as well as having an influence on customer product judgment (Herr et al 1991, Bone 1995). WOM is often seen as the most influential form of marketing, especially if its coming from someone with which an individual has close ties with (Ennew et al. 2000).

Ever since the arrival and popularity of the Internet, consumers and businesses both have welcomed a new, much more comprehensive form of WOM – electronic Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM). eWOM is proven to be as credible as offline WOM, as it is seen as one of the most influential sources of information for consumers (Jailvand et al. 2010). Many of the available forms of eWOM include social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram), review sites (e.g. Tripadvisor), retail sites (e.g. Amazon.com), personal blogs which can nowadays have millions of monthly readers, chatrooms, newsgroups (e.g. Google Group), email and so on (Jailvand et al. 2011). eWOM enables consumers to share their opinions and expertise with a much larger audience than just close friends and relatives as with offline WOM, both prior to and post purchasing (Bailey, 2005). Given the distinct characteristics of the Internet – directed to several people at once, available for an infinite period of time, anonymity – information online is able to spread like wildfire and reach millions of consumers around the world (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Although some researchers consider anonymity of eWOM as an advantage, other researchers argue that it has the potential to make online reviews less credible as consumers are unable to identify the source of the information (Wallace et al. 2011; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Nevertheless, consumers feel more comfortable expressing themselves on the Internet without revealing their identities (Goldsmith & Horowitz 2006). What makes eWOM so powerful, is the fact that consumers commonly take the word of their peers' over advertisers' (Little 2015).

The significant impact of eWOM in consumer purchase intention has been long known, as there is a multitude of prior research available. According to a research conducted by business.com (2015), around 80% of consumers read online reviews before purchasing a product. Previous studies concerning eWOM have revolved around the motives for consumers to write reviews online (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004), the motives for consumers to seek eWOM online (Goldsmith & Horowitz 2006), the impacts on consumer decision-making (Cheung et al. 2008; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2013; Cheung & Lee 2008; Senecal & Nantel 2004), attitudes towards eWOM (Levy 2016), the possible impact of gender and sexes on eWOM (Maceli et al. 2015), the credibility of eWOM (Man Yee et al. 2009), the consumer awareness of product review sites (Bailey, 2005), as well as the coping mechanisms to skim through thousands of reviews (Gotsschalk & Mafael 2017).

## **1.2. Research Questions**

The first aim of this paper is to address a gap in existing literature by comparing the impact of eWOM in the forms of social media chatter (Instagram) and retail sites (Amazon). The main differences between these two forms is, that social media chatter is visual-based and reviews on retail sites are mostly text-based. The second aim is to examine whether different functional attitudes have varying influences on purchase intention. Theoretical background has been adapted from Katz's (1960) research on functional attitudes. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate two main research questions:

1. Which form of eWOM is more effective in impacting consumer purchase intention, reviews on online retail sites (which entail mostly textual information, e.g. Amazon) or on social media (which mostly consist of images, e.g. Instagram)?
2. Are there differences in the impacts of forms (textual vs. visual) of eWOM on purchase intention, in regards to the functional attitude displayed in the review?



## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section of the paper will provide a comprehensive understanding of earlier literature and studies in the field revolving around cosmetics, consumer behavior and electronic word-of-mouth. The literature review is arranged thematically. Firstly, an overview of the global cosmetics industry is presented. Secondly, a more thorough insight to electronic word-of-mouth is provided, including five subheadings. Thirdly, the impact of social influences is discussed. Lastly, a theoretical background of the functional attitude theory is provided, and will work as a basis for a conceptual framework presented in the end of this section.

### **2.1. Overview of the cosmetic industry**

The cosmetics industry has experienced steady and continuous growth in the recent years, and is known to be resistant to changes in the economic environment. Even after the Great Recession in 2008, the annual growth rate of the global cosmetic market increased by 1% instead of going stagnant, like many other industries (statista.com, n.d.). In 2016, the industry generated around \$62,6 billion in revenue in the U.S alone (statista.com, 2017). Social media is an essential driver when it comes to this industry, as 82% of women believe that social media is behind setting new beauty trends (Sena, n.d.). Social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are powerful amongst certain groups, e.g. youngsters, and help bring the cosmetics brand closer to the consumer (statista.com, n.d.). According to Guthrie et al. (2007), consumers use cosmetics for the same reason that they wear flattering clothing; to enhance one's feelings about themselves and to improve one's flawed self-image. A recent research by Crooks (2013) indicates that 4 out of 5 women wear make-up.

The cosmetic industry can be divided into 6 different segments: skincare, haircare, make-up, perfumes, toiletries and oral cosmetics. During the past years, the largest portion (around one third in 2015) of the market has been composed of skincare products (statista.com). This paper will focus on make-up products as they are easy to review textually as well as visually. The make-up segment can be further divided into foundations, mascaras, lip sticks, eye shadows and eye brow products (statista.com, n.d.).

The leading cosmetics brands have remained relatively similar during the past years, i.e., the top three brands have not varied. In 2015, the top three were L’Oreal with a revenue of 29,94 billion USD, Unilever with a revenue of 21,66 billion USD and Procter & Gamble with a revenue of 19,8 billion USD (insidermonkey.com). The industry leaders have had a difficult time retaining their positions on the top, with problems such as changing trends, classifications, safety issues, environmental issues, animal testing, natural ingredients and economic impact (Kumar, 2005).

## **2.2. Working definition of eWOM**

Electronic word-of-mouth communication can be defined as the process of sharing positive and negative information, opinions and experience by any potential, current or former customer about a company, service or product to a large mass of people via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, Blazevic et al. 2013). eWOM on social media refers to product criticism, pictures, recommendations, tutorial videos and so on. Moreover, eWOM on retail sites refers to star ratings, review helpfulness ratings and textual reviews typically lacking visual aids. Figures 1 (p. 7) and 2 (p. 8) display examples of the two forms.

### **2.2.1. Motives for consumers to engage in eWOM**

The motives behind both seeking and providing eWOM have been a subject of interest for researchers for some time. Given the conceptual closeness of offline WOM and eWOM, many of the consumer motives recognized in WOM in earlier studies before the advent of the Internet apply to eWOM as well (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004).

Karjaluoto et al. (2016) argue that consumers with an emotional attachment to a brand spread more positive offline and online WOM. Secondly, the researchers also concluded that age had a significant impact on providing eWOM: older respondents in their survey were more active in sharing positive eWOM. Thirdly, the researchers found that gender had no association with eWOM. Perhaps the most comprehensive and known study for the motives to *share* opinions online was conducted by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), on which multiple more recent researches are founded on (e.g. Cheung & Lee 2012). Hennig-Thurau et al.

build their theoretical framework up on the study for motives in eWOM on Balasubramanian and Mahajan's (2001) related research on social and economic activity within a virtual community. In addition to the three kinds of consumer utilities identified by Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) – *Focus-related utility*, *Consumption utility* and *Approval utility* – Hennig-Thurau provides two new utilities – *Moderator-related utility* and *Homeostasis utility*.

*Focus-Related Utility* is based on an assumption that it is important to “add value” to a community. The researchers identify four different motives relating to focus-related utility; *concern for other consumers*, *helping the company*, *social benefits* and *exerting power*. *Consumption Utility* refers to the fact that consumers might feel more motivated to solicit information after reading comments and reviews written by other consumers. Writing a comment may allow one to gain even “more specific and useful feedback” than just anonymously reading the comments of others. The identified motive is *post purchase advice-seeking* to gain knowledge and skills to better understand, use or repair a product. *Approval Utility* is concerned with the satisfaction that comes from the approval of other online users after reading one's own contributions, i.e. an online review. There are two identified motives: *self-enhancement motivation* - driven by one's positive recognition and *economic reward* - receiving monetary provision from the specific website. *Moderator-Related Utility* is derived when a third party, in this case the review website, delivers the customer's negative review directly to the company on behalf of the customer. The two recognized motives are *convenience to the customer* and *problem-solving support*. *Homeostasis Utility* is based on the idea that people have an innate desire to maintain a balance in their lives. For example, after a negative experience with a product, balance can be restored by writing an online review to let go of negative feelings. The two main motives are *expressing positive emotions* and *venting negative feelings*. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004)

Utility	Motive(s)
Focus-Related	Concern for other consumers Helping the company Social benefits Exerting power
Consumption	Post purchase advice-seeking
Approval	Self-enhancement Economic reward
Moderator-Related	Convenience Problem-solving support
Homeostasis	Expressing positive emotions Venting negative feelings

Table 1: Motives for engaging in eWOM, based on Hennig-Thurau and Balasubramanian & Mahajan

It is also crucial to understand the reasons why consumers actively look for eWOM prior to purchasing or judging a product. As for the motives behind *seeking* eWOM, Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006) have identified eight main items. These include to “*reduce their risk, because others do it, to secure lower prices, to get information easily, by accident (unplanned), because it is cool, because they are stimulated by off-line inputs such as TV, and to get pre-purchase information*”. The researchers also pointed out that consumers who tend to purchase more products online, also seek eWOM more frequently.

### 2.2.2. Differences between WOM and eWOM

eWOM resembles traditional offline WOM in some ways, but researchers have identified many distinct characteristics of eWOM. Firstly, consumers are able to access and receive information from strangers, not just friends and family. Secondly, the Internet allows the information dissemination to happen a lot faster than in offline WOM. According to Erkan (2016), this is the most prominent difference between the two forms of WOM. Thirdly, eWOM allows its providers to support their arguments with visual effects such as pictures and

videos. Furthermore, marketers are able to track customers' conversations in eWOM. This is of great help to marketers and brand managers, as they can take advantage of the feedback by modifying and updating their strategies and other practices. (Erkan, 2016)

### **2.2.3. eWOM on Social Media**

According to Chu & Kim (2011), social media is an ideal tool for eWOM as it allows consumers to generate brand-related information without constraints in their own social media networks with friends and acquaintances, who can then share this information onwards with their friends. Furthermore, social media websites “allow opinion leaders to create and promote profiles” which are related to specific brands and their products/services (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Social media is a hybrid element of the promotion mix because it allows companies to talk to their customers and establish strong relationships, while simultaneously allowing consumers to directly communicate with each other (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). According to a recent report by the Pew Research Center, 69% of online users in the U.S. are also using some type of social media. The most dominant social network is Facebook with over 1,590 million users worldwide, followed by Facebook-owned WhatsApp with 1,000 million users. Instagram, also owned by Facebook, and Twitter have over 400 million and 320 million users, consecutively. Influencers in the cosmetics industry have an immense amount of followers on social media. For example, a Dubai-based make-up artist Huda Kattan has over 17 million followers on Instagram and the U.S. -based brand Sephora has over 10 million. Thus, this paper will focus on cosmetic product reviews on Instagram, which entail visual aids in addition to traditional textual reviews as seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Example of eWOM on Instagram

#### 2.2.4. eWOM on retail sites

There are many shopping sites online that also provide a review service, Amazon possibly being the best known, where one can share their experience and knowledge of products with other consumers. As seen in Figure 2, reviews on retail sites entail many information cues such as star rating, date, textual review, helpfulness rating and so on. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) found that customer eWOM on Amazon had a significant effect on consumer purchase decision-making process. Furthermore, Erkan & Evans (2016) conducted a research comparing the influence of eWOM on shopping sites and social media, and were surprised to find out that reviews on shopping sites carried more weight in the minds of consumers. It is important to understand that different functional attitudes may have varying impacts on purchase intention. On the other hand, Lin et al., (2012) argue that some consumers might discount the credibility and quality of a review on websites due to the fact that some web sites encourage customers to leave feedback in return for a small fee. As there is more anonymity and less personal liability in the provided review, consumers might be skeptical about the source and therefore not trust the criticism. Senecal & Nantel (2004) questioned the trustworthiness of such “commercially” linked websites in an examination, but pointed out that there was no significant difference found between commercially and non-commercially linked websites.

## Top Customer Reviews

★★★★☆ Will Last Forever

By [Andrea Adams](#) on December 2, 2009

Verified Purchase

This may seem pricey for a face wash, but the tube will last forever if you use it properly. You only need the tiniest amount to lather up your whole face. I have only been using the product for about a week, but already my face feels smoother, less oily and the tone seems to be improving. I have to rinse quite a bit to get all of the soap off, but once it's all off, my skin feels super clean.

[Comment](#) | 10 people found this helpful. Was this review helpful to you?   [Report abuse](#)

Figure 2: Example of eWOM on Amazon

Based on the research conducted by Erkan & Evans (2016), this research argues that text-based eWOM on retail sites will be more effective than visual-based eWOM on social media as it is more thorough, comprehensive and detailed. Thus, hypothesis 1 can be proposed.

H1: In general, textual eWOM on retail sites is more effective in impacting consumer purchase intention than mostly visual eWOM on social media.

### 2.3. Social influences

When in the process of purchase decision making, consumers are often affected by their peers. Bearden et al. (1989) define susceptibility to interpersonal influences as “the need to identify with or enhance one’s image in the opinion of others by purchasing and using certain products or brands”. In other words, it is the level of influence other people have on an individual’s behavior, furthermore purchase intention. Susceptibility to interpersonal influence can be further separated into to sub-categories. Firstly, in the above research, the authors define normative influence as the tendency to agree to the expectations of others. Secondly, informational influence can be defined as the tendency to accept information from others as proof from reality. A link can be identified between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and engaging in eWOM. Consumers with a high level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence may be affected by eWOM more heavily, compared to consumers with a low level of said construct. Bearden et al.’s research provides a framework, in which various factors of susceptibility to interpersonal influence are measured. For example, the framework studies the importance of gaining social acceptance from peers. Therefore,

social influences must also be taken into account when studying the impacts eWOM on purchase intention.

## **2.4. Theoretical background – functional attitudes**

Although the Internet contains a vast number of information and functions as a basic information channel, the influence of e.g. a product review has on consumers may vary (Cheung et al. 2008). Cheung et al. also argue that the same content can evoke different responses from person to person, as the recipients' perceptions, past experience and attitudes towards an object may be not be identical. Pratkanis et al. (1989) further explain that attitudes carry a number of functions for people; in addition to guiding perception, they also lead behavior and information processing. Furthermore, attitudes function as a basis for consumer purchase intentions. A link can be identified and rationalized between the consumer perceptions of eWOM and Daniel Katz's (1960) theory of functional attitudes.

According to Katz's (1960) pragmatic approach, people generate attitudes to serve a specific function (Solomon et al. 2006). Thus, two people can have the same attitude towards a product for two very distinct reasons. Katz identifies four dimensions of the functional attitudes theory and groups them by their motivational basis as *the utilitarian function*, *the ego-defensive function*, *the value-expressive function* and *the knowledge function*. Attitudes can serve more than one function at a time, but commonly one function will be dominant. The following sections will define and discuss the four dimensions of the theory. All definitions are according to Katz's earlier work.

### **2.4.1. Utilitarian function**

Upon the *utilitarian function*, also known as the adjustment function, people aim to maximize rewards and minimize sanctions in their external environment. In other words, we develop certain attitudes towards products which provide us either pain or pleasure. For example, if a consumer reads a favorable product review, the utilitarian function may be fulfilled by gaining insight of the product's functionality and other utilitarian characteristics. Thus, a textual review instead of a visual review based on the utilitarian



function might offer more insight to the product's functionality as it is more detailed. Furthermore, the impact on purchase intention can presumably be stronger with textual reviews in relation to the utilitarian function. Based on this, hypothesis 2 can be proposed. An example of a review could be the following.

"This mascara provided a dark look without making my lashes feel heavy. My lashes also felt hydrated throughout the day and the product didn't wear off. The mascara also has a very pleasant, floral fragrance. I really enjoyed wearing the product on my lashes."

H2: Utilitarian function will have a more significant impact on purchase intentions of cosmetic products when the review is text based rather than visual based.

#### **2.4.2. Ego-Defensive function**

In the *ego-defensive function*, people strive to protect their self-esteem and justify actions that make them guilty, embarrassed or wrong. Thus, people may deliberately disregard basic truths about themselves or the realities of the external environment. Furthermore, attitudes help us fit in a social group and find people who share the same attitudes. Ordinarily, people are unaware of their defense mechanisms; they don't know when they are utilizing one, nor for exactly what reason they are protecting their egos (Solomon et al. 2006). For example, if a consumer reads a favorable product review which touches their insecurities or perceived flaws in some way, the ego-defensive function may be fulfilled by allowing them to defend their purchase or make them believe they will feel better about themselves with the specific product. However, if the receiver's image (positive) of a product collides with the sender's message (negative), they might purposely ignore it to defend one's self-image and avoid being wrong. According to Margalit (2015), human brains process visual material 60,000 times faster than text. The impact of a review based on ego-defensive function might thus be greater when the review is visual, since consumers might be assured that they're not being deceived. Based on the above reasoning, hypothesis 3 can be proposed.

An example of a review could be the following.

“I never used to get attention from men. After purchasing this mascara, I was constantly the center of attention at parties and I’m now dating a handsome male model.”

H3: Ego-defensive function will have a more significant impact on purchase intentions of cosmetic products when the review is visual based instead of text based.

### **2.4.3. Value-Expressive function**

The *value-expressive function*, also known as ego-expressive function, embodies the attitudes which enable people to express who they are and therefore gives a satisfaction for presenting their identity and core values with others. In contrast to the previous functions, the value-expressive function does not try to prevent individuals from exhibiting their true nature, but assists in presenting their positive perceived self-image. Thus, attitudes are an essential part of our identity. A consumer develops product attitudes for the sake of what the product says about him or her (Solomon et al. 2006). For example, this function may be fulfilled if a consumer reads a favorable product review, which provides insight to what values the product represents, and these match his or her values. A link between value-expressive function and ethical consumption can be rationalized. Doane (2001) defines ethical consumption as a purchase that concerns an ethical issue such as human rights, animal rights, the environment and so on. According to research by Attalla & Carrigan (2001), consumers value ethical aspects in a product but their behavior in a market place is not coherent with this finding. The research suggested that consumers in general are not willing to pay extra for ethical products. Therefore, hypothesis 4 can be proposed.

An example of a review could be the following.

“Animal as well as human rights are extremely important to me. This mascara has not been animal tested and is made of 90% organic ingredients. It’s the best environmentally friendly mascara I have ever tried.”

H4: Value-expressive function will not have a significant impact on purchase intentions of cosmetic products in either forms of eWOM.

#### **2.4.4. Knowledge function**

With the *knowledge function*, people seek to provide meaning, order and structure for life through attitudes. This function allows us to forecast what is likely to happen and therefore gives us a feeling of control over our lives. Attitudes supply us with standards of evaluation. This function is often performed when facing an entirely new product. Thus, a detailed and thorough positive review of a product provides one with an evaluation of the product's characteristics and performance, and furthermore assists one in the decision-making process. Hence, it could be argued that the knowledge function is the most effective out of the aforementioned four functions. Consumer brand loyalty is also linked to this function. Based on Erkan & Evans (2016) findings, it can be assumed that consumers prefer text-based reviews in regards to the knowledge function as the information is more detailed, thorough and planned. Thus, hypothesis 5 can be drawn. In addition, it can be assumed that consumers find knowledge based reviews the most helpful, as many seek eWOM to learn about a product's characteristics from other users before purchasing.

An example of a review could be the following.

"This mascara is long-lasting and highly pigmented. The brush reaches my eyelashes in the inner corners of my eyes too. My eye lashes appear long and curly with this mascara, even after a night out. What a great value for money!"

H5: Knowledge function will have a more significant impact on purchase intentions of cosmetic products when the review is text-based rather than visual-based.

In this paper, the aim is to better understand which functional attitudes are behind perceiving online reviews, which then potentially lead to purchase intentions. In addition, the paper will compare the impacts of each function.

### **2.5. Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework was developed on the basis of earlier literature (Figure 3). The framework will later on guide the collection of primary data. In practice, the very first steps before information adaption would be information engagement followed by the decision of

whether the information, in other words online review, is accepted as useful or not. This research focuses only on information adaption and purchase intention, hence these mentioned first steps are ignored. The framework flows from information adaption to purchase intention, passing through functional attitudes. After adapting the information in an online review, a consumer will consciously or subconsciously decide which of the four functional attitudes the information serves for them. Firstly, if the review comprehends information about the utility, i.e. happiness or sanction, the product provides, the review will employ the consumer's utilitarian function. Secondly, if the review touches upon the consumer's self-concept and perceived flaws, the ego-defensive function will be employed. Thirdly, if the review is based on the central values of the reader, e.g. animal rights or feminism, the value-expressive function will be employed. Lastly, if the review provides fact-based information about the product's usability and results, the knowledge function will be employed. It is also potential for more than one function to be employed simultaneously. A single review can provide information about many aspects of a product, e.g. both fact-based information as well as the central values the product reflects.

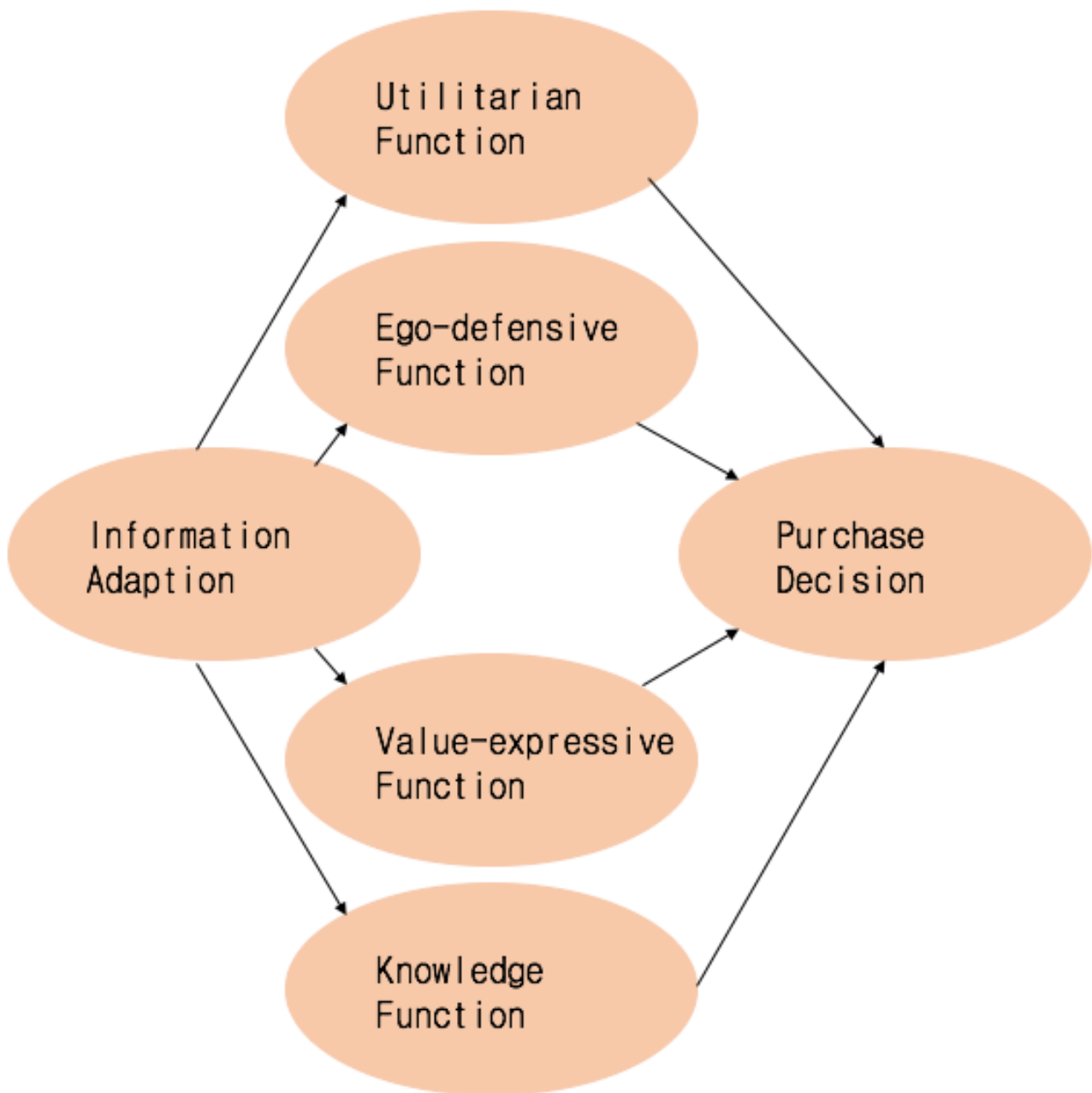


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter will discuss the methodology utilized in the research. The sections are sorted thematically. Firstly, the methods of research are discussed. Secondly, the design of the questionnaire will be reviewed. Thirdly, methods of sampling as well as data analysis will be processed. Lastly, potential ethical issues will be addressed.

#### **3.1. Research Methods and Data Collection**

To begin with, it is essential to comprehend the existing literature of the industry in order to form a better picture of the main concepts and theories it beholds. Therefore, prior research in the field of consumer behavior and eWOM was studied to compose the literature review presented in section 2. The process was initiated by recognizing main themes within the topic, followed by a thorough literature research. Nearly all of the academic and peer-reviewed articles examined in the literature review were discovered from Google Scholar.

As this study focuses on both the impact of eWOM on consumer purchase intentions as well as different attitude functions displayed in the review, the collection of primary data was essential in order to gain a more profound understanding of the topic. Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework was developed entailing eight constructs. Furthermore, the conceptual framework guided the direction for the collection of primary data. The data were collected through an online questionnaire targeted at women actively engaged in social media.

The online questionnaire was distributed in six different Facebook groups, including student groups and groups intended for the lovers of cosmetics products. The respondents were assured that all responses remain confidential. An incentive to answer the questionnaire was offered, which was a bundle of new makeup products from the Finnish brand Lumene. The makeup set was randomly raffled among all respondents. A link to the questionnaire was distributed online on February 20th 2017 and the questionnaire was closed on March 8th. Due to the choice of medium for the survey's distribution, it is impossible to tell how many people saw the link, thus the response rate is unknown.

### **3.2. Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire was designed to reflect the research objectives of this study. The purpose of the online questionnaire was to quantitatively measure the impact of eWOM on consumer purchase intention and the effectiveness of the different types of functional attitudes in reviews. The questionnaire was designed online, using Google Forms software. Online questionnaire was chosen for three main reasons. Firstly, in order to reach respondents regardless of their geographical location. Secondly, to gather numerical data which could later be analyzed in SPSS. Lastly, in order to reach consumers who are familiar with electronic devices and use the internet frequently.

The questionnaire began with socio-demographic measures, followed by six items investigating susceptibility to interpersonal influences. These measurement scales were adapted from Bearden et al.'s (1989) prior research. The sentences were slightly modified in order to mirror the research objectives of this study.

The next sections of the questionnaire addressed the functional attitude theory (Katz, 1960) in regards to online reviews. The measurement scales in the questionnaire were adopted from earlier literature. The measurement scales utilized in the utilitarian function were adapted from Grewal et al. (2004) research, the ego-defensive function were adapted from Clary et al. (1998) research, the value-expressive function from Wilcox et al. (2009) research and knowledge function from Grewal et al. (2004) research. The items were then accommodated to serve the exact purpose of this study by slightly modifying the sentence structures. As the research was narrowed down to makeup products, the questionnaire contained reviews of a mascara to represent the whole segment of the cosmetics industry.

To measure the four different functional attitudes in both textual and visual forms, the questionnaire was developed in eight different versions. The respondents were segmented into groups based on their date of birth. This was due to the fact that Google Forms does not possess a function of "randomizing" the respondents. The Google Forms questionnaire was designed so, that all respondents were firstly exposed to questions about socio-demographic and susceptibility to interpersonal influences. Next, the respondents were exposed to only one of the eight different reviews. Lastly, all respondents were directed to the "purchase intention" part of the survey. Four versions of the questionnaire contained

merely textual reviews and four versions contained mostly visual reviews accompanied with a short text. The visuals used in the questionnaire were pictures taken by the author. Both the textual and visual review were intended to mirror the same functional attitude. Figure 4 illustrates an example of a textual review of the knowledge function. Figure 5 illustrates the same function in a visual review. The questionnaire was reviewed by an academic expert, and minor changes were made to the wording. The complete questionnaire from Google Forms can be found in the appendices at the end of this paper.

**"This mascara is long-lasting and highly pigmented. The brush reaches my eyelashes in the inner corners of my eyes too. My eye lashes appear long and curly with this mascara, even after a night out. What a great value for money!"**

Figure 4: Text-based review for knowledge function



"This mascara is highly pigmented and long-lasting. The brush reaches the lashes in the inner corners of my eyes too. My lashes appear long and curly like never before!"



Figure 5: Visual-based review for knowledge function

### 3.3. Sampling

The research sample used in the study was a non-probability sample. The type of sampling method utilized in this research was convenience sampling, as all of the participants volunteered to take part and were not randomly selected. This specific method was chosen due to its facile and simple nature. In addition, convenience sampling was found to be useful in examining the phenomenon of eWOM's impact on purchase intention within a given sample. According to a study conducted by Baltar & Brunet (2012), the number of respondents reached via Facebook using a similar method is higher than by using traditional snowball effects. The authors found that by using non-probabilistic sampling methods on the internet, consumers build more confidence towards the researcher, since they reveal their personal information (Facebook profile) as well as engage in their groups of interest

(Facebook groups). The downside for this sampling method is the fact that it does not represent the entire population. Regardless, convenience sampling allowed the target audience of the research to be reached via social media in a short period of time. The n of the sample was 155.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

The data collected was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software application. More specifically, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and independent samples t-tests to generate a better image of the responses. Moreover, linear regression analyses were utilized in order to test the hypotheses of the study.

### **3.5. Ethical issues in research**

Due to the choice of medium as well as form of data collection, there is potential for ethical issues to rise. According to Eysenbach and Till (2001), these include problems such as privacy, confidentiality and so on. In regards to this research, the respondents were assured that all responses would stay confidential. The online questionnaire also stated, that the respondent may exit the form whenever they wished to, in case they did not want to continue any further. None of the respondents were bribed, pressured nor forced to answer the survey. The survey did not ask for any sensitive information, and did not favor any respondent in any possible way. Although the questionnaire was mostly intended for female respondents, it was designed in a way that did not discriminate male respondents.

## 4. FINDINGS

This chapter will discuss the findings of this research. These findings will be sorted thematically. First, the findings related to respondent profile are presented. Secondly, a reliability analysis is demonstrated including all the constructs of the functional attitude theory. Lastly, the hypotheses established in the literature review are tested and displayed.

### 4.1. Respondent Profile

The sample consisted of 155 responds in total. The age of the sample ranged from 15 to 33 years old, the median age being 21 years old. In terms of gender distribution, 96% of the respondents were female, and the rest were male. This was expected as the questionnaire dealt with makeup products, which are commonly of female consumers' interest. In relation to the education level, the majority of the respondents (56,8%) were Bachelor's degree students, 5,8% Master's degree students, 31% high school graduates and the rest were elementary school graduates or PhD's. With regard to monthly income levels, 66,5% respondents reported having a monthly income of less than 1,000€, 25,8% reported a monthly income of 1,001€-3,000€, 0,6% reported a monthly income of 3,001€-5,000€ and the remaining 7,1% preferred not to say. Daily social media users represented 96,8% of the respondents and the remaining 3,2% indicated to be engaged in social media on a weekly basis. In addition to socio-demographic information, the responders reported two aspects essential for the research: frequency of engaging in eWOM prior to purchasing products as well as the level of interest towards latest cosmetics. These two questions were evaluated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The majority of respondents placed on either *agree* or *strongly agree* in both questions. All of the socio-demographic information are presented in figures six through nine as reported by the respondents.

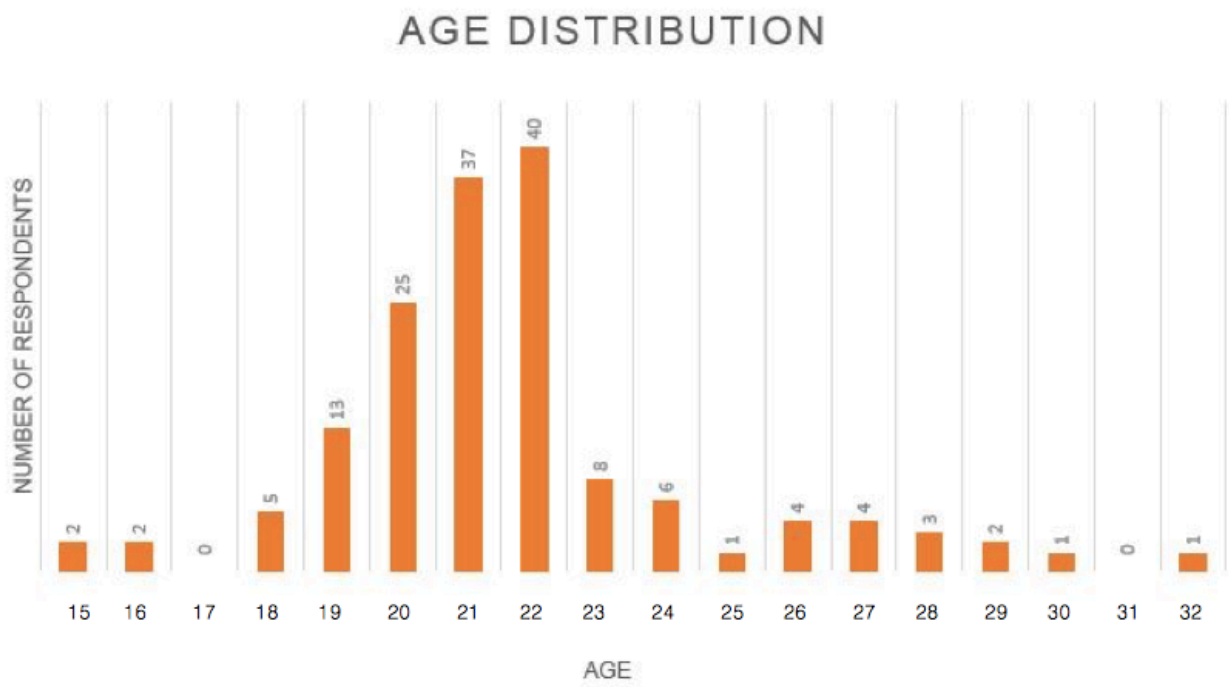


Figure 6: Age Distribution

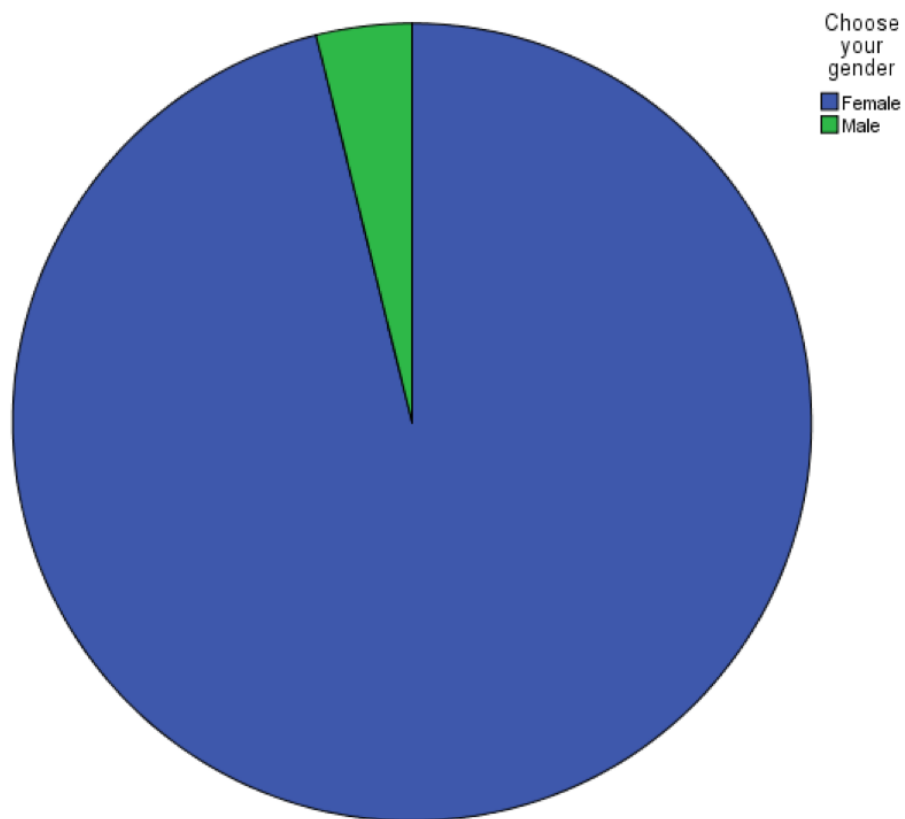


Figure 7: Sex Distribution

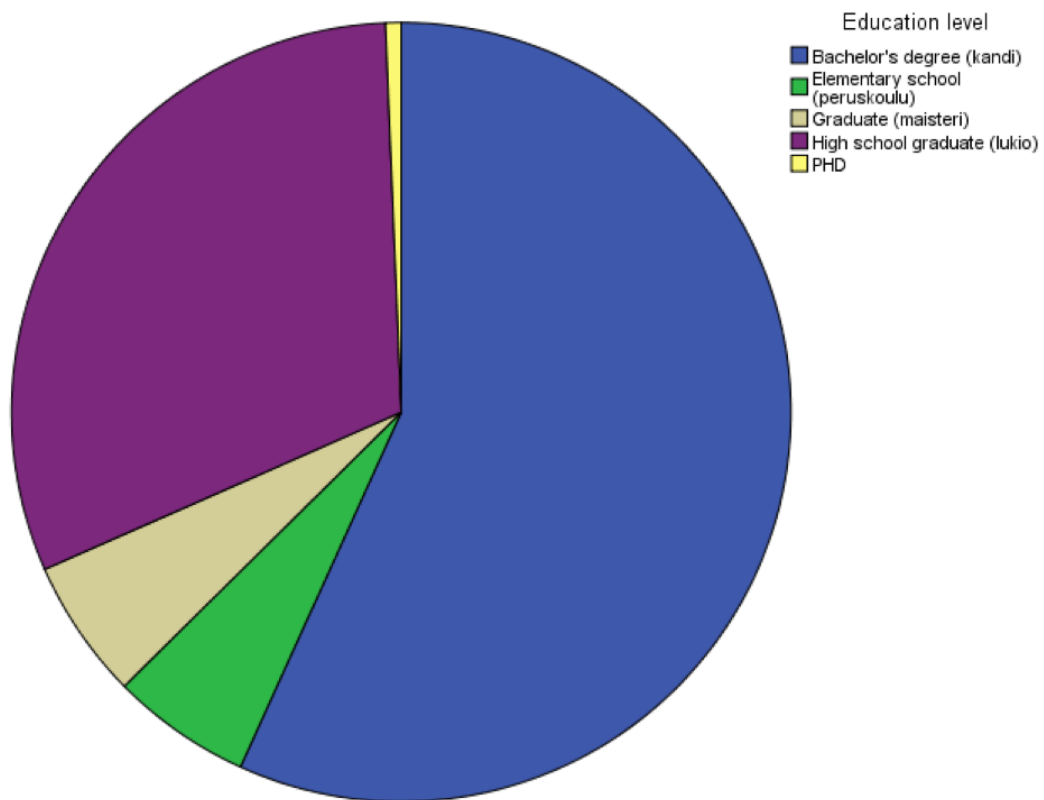


Figure 8: Education level

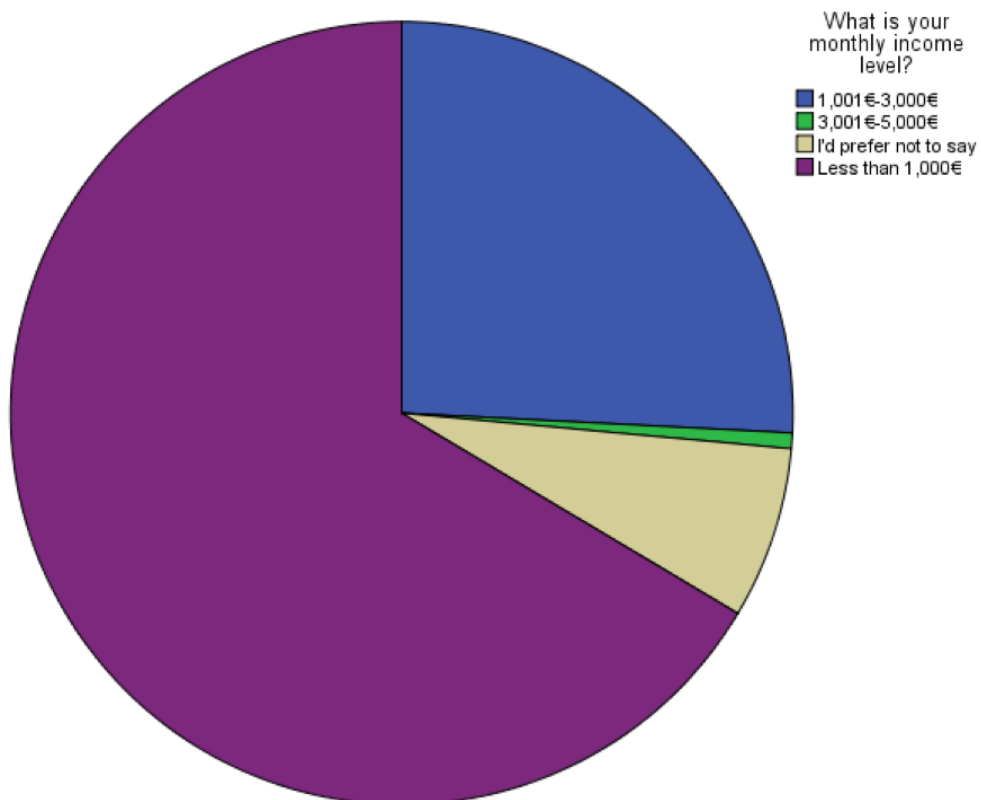


Figure 9: Income level

In terms of susceptibility to interpersonal influences, there were six different items in the online questionnaire as presented in figure 10. The results presented in the table represent means for each item. To be more specific, the mean for item one was 2,55, item two was 2,49, item three was 3,06, item four was 2,46, item five was 3,52 and item six was 3,41. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that an individual from the sample would more likely consult a friend before purchasing a product in order to listen to their recommendations, but not necessarily in order to impress them.



Figure 10: Susceptibility to interpersonal influence

## 4.2. Reliability Analysis

In order to guarantee internal consistency between each of the eight versions of the online questionnaire, a reliability analysis was conducted in SPSS for each construct individually. Cronbach's alpha is considered a measure of reliability, which is why it was chosen as a measurement scale. An alpha above ,7 is considered reliable and of internal consistency. The following tables display each function in a separate table, with Cronbach's Alpha results from both text-based and visual-based review. The questions were identical in both text-based and visual-based review within a certain function. All of the measurement scales can be found in appendices at the end of this paper.

Utilitarian function, Textual review	,776
Utilitarian function, Visual review	,869

Table 2: Reliability analysis, utilitarian function

Ego-Defensive function, Textual review	,886
Ego-Defensive function, Visual review	,855

Table 3: Reliability analysis, ego-defensive function

Value-Expressive function, Textual review	,864
Value-Expressive function, Visual review	,796

Table 4: Reliability analysis, value-expressive function

Knowledge function, Textual Review	,849
Knowledge function, Visual review	,714

Table 5: Reliability analysis, knowledge function

As the above statistics suggest, all of the eight versions of the research questionnaire are considered reliable and internally consistent.

### 4.3. Hypothesis Testing

In regards to the five hypothesis proposed in the literature review, separate tests were conducted in SPSS to find out whether they were supported by the research or not. The findings are presented in a numerical order.

**H1:** In general, textual eWOM on retail sites is more effective in impacting consumer purchase intention than mostly visual eWOM on social media.

In terms of H1, an Independent-Samples T Test was conducted. The results of the test are presented in tables 7 and 8.

**Group Statistics**

	text vs. visual	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?	text	84	3,321	1,0079	,1100
	visual	71	3,099	1,1358	,1348

Table 6: Group statistics

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?	Equal variances assumed	1,018	,315	1,294	153	,198
	Equal variances not assumed			1,281	141,373	,202

Table 7: Independent Samples Test

As displayed in the tables, the study found that the form of eWOM had no significant impact on purchase intention ( $P < 0,05$ ). Although the mean of text-based eWOM is slightly greater than visual-based eWOM, the Sig. value is greater than 0,05. The findings therefore do not support H1.



**H2:** Utilitarian function will have a more significant impact on purchase intentions of cosmetic products when the review is text based rather than visual based.

In regards to H2, a Linear Regression analysis was conducted using a split file. The results are presented in tables 9 and 10.

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>										
text vs. visual	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
						R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
text	1	,024 <sup>a</sup>	,001	-,071	1,0430	,001	,008	1	14	,929
visual	1	,809 <sup>a</sup>	,655	,630	,6908	,655	26,558	1	14	,000

a. Predictors: (Constant), UTIALL

b. Dependent Variable: How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?

Table 8: Model summary, utilitarian function

By examining the model summary table, it can be observed that in the case of the visual based review, the influence of utilitarian function on purchase intention was significant (Sig. F change<0,05). However, the influence was found non-significant in the case of text-based review.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>									
text vs. visual	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
text	1	(Constant)	3,448	1,419		2,430	,029		
		UTIALL	-,034	,375	-,024	-,091	,929	1,000	1,000
visual	1	(Constant)	-,245	,671		-,365	,721		
		UTIALL	1,109	,215	,809	5,153	,000	1,000	1,000

a. Dependent Variable: How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?

Table 9: Coefficients, utilitarian function

The coefficients table shows that utilitarian function had a significant impact on purchase intention in the case of visual based reviews ( $\beta=0,809$ ; t-value=5,153). In the case of text-based review, the relationship was not significant. Thus, the relationship proposed in H2 is significant but in a reverse direction. To be more specific, the influence of utilitarian function was greater in the case of visual-based review.

**H3:** Ego-defensive function will have a more significant impact on purchase intentions of cosmetic products when the review is visual based instead of text based.

In terms of H3, a Linear Regression analysis was conducted again using a split file. The results of this study can be found in tables 11 and 12.

**Model Summary<sup>a</sup>**

text vs. visual	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
						R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
text	1	,556 <sup>a</sup>	,310	,281	,8548	,310	10,758	1	24	,003
visual	1	,669 <sup>a</sup>	,448	,411	,8718	,448	12,158	1	15	,003

a. Predictors: (Constant), EGOALL

b. Dependent Variable: How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?

Table 10: Model summary, ego-defensive function

As displayed in the model summary table, the impact of ego-defensive function on purchase intention was equal in both forms of eWOM (Sig. F change=0,003). The results are statistically significant in both text-based and visual-based reviews (Sig. F change<0,05).

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

text vs. visual	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
			B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
text	1	(Constant)	1,692	,524		3,227	,004		
		EGOALL	,562	,171	,556	3,280	,003	1,000	1,000
visual	1	(Constant)	,653	,732		,892	,386		
		EGOALL	,799	,229	,669	3,487	,003	1,000	1,000

a. Dependent Variable: How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?

Table 11: Coefficients, ego-defensive function

The coefficients table proves that the ego-defensive function had indeed a significant impact on purchase intention in both cases ( $\beta$  value of text-based=0,556,  $\beta$  of visual-based 0,669,  $t>1,96$  in both cases). Therefore, H3 is not supported. In contrast, both forms of eWOM had an equal, yet significant impact on purchase intention instead of visual-based reviews outweighing text-based reviews.

**H4:** Value-expressive function will not have a significant impact on purchase intentions of cosmetic products in either forms of eWOM.

In regards to H4, a Linear Regression analysis was conducted with a split file. The results are presented in tables 13 and 14.

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

text vs. visual	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
						R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
text	1	,372 <sup>a</sup>	,138	,103	,9549	,138	3,856	1	24	,061
visual	1	,513 <sup>a</sup>	,263	,226	,9993	,263	7,133	1	20	,015

a. Predictors: (Constant), VALALL

b. Dependent Variable: How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?

Table 12: Model summary, value-expressive

By examining model summary, it can be seen that the impact on purchase intention was significant in the case of visual-based reviews (Sig. F change<0,05). However, as the hypothesis states, the case of text-based review was not significant (Sig. F Change>0,05).

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

text vs. visual	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
			B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
text	1	(Constant)	2,117	,642		3,299	,003		
		VALALL	,441	,225	,372	1,964	,061	1,000	1,000
visual	1	(Constant)	,012	1,175		,010	,992		
		VALALL	,916	,343	,513	2,671	,015	1,000	1,000

a. Dependent Variable: How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?

Table 13: Coefficients, value-expressive function

The coefficients table proves that in the case of visual-based reviews, the results are significant ( $\beta$  value= 0,513 and t-value>1,96). However, the results in the case of text-based reviews are ambiguous ( $\beta$ = 0,372,  $t > 1,96$  but Sig.<0,05). However, a conclusion can be drawn that the impact of value-expressive in text-based reviews are non-significant if only taking into account the Sig. F change value. Therefore, H4 is not supported due to the fact that visual-based reviews did have a significant impact on purchase intention.

**H5:** Knowledge function will have a more significant impact on purchase intentions of cosmetic products when the review is text-based rather than visual-based.

In order to test H5, a Linear Regression analysis was conducted with split files. The results are displayed in tables 15 and 16 below.

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

text vs. visual	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
						R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
text	1	,521 <sup>a</sup>	,271	,219	,8908	,271	5,202	1	14	,039
visual	1	,796 <sup>a</sup>	,633	,607	,7123	,633	24,138	1	14	,000

a. Predictors: (Constant), KNOALL

b. Dependent Variable: How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?

Table 14: Model summary, knowledge function

The model summary table shows that the knowledge function has a significant impact on purchase intention in both text-based and visual-based reviews (Sig. F change<0,05 in both cases). However, by comparing the two values, it is clear that in the case of visual-based reviews, the significance is greater.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

text vs. visual	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
			B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
text	1	(Constant)	1,167	,970		1,202	,249		
		KNOALL	,631	,277	,521	2,281	,039	1,000	1,000
visual	1	(Constant)	-2,160	1,085		-1,991	,066		
		KNOALL	1,547	,315	,796	4,913	,000	1,000	1,000

a. Dependent Variable: How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review?

Table 15: Coefficients, knowledge function

By examining the coefficients table, a conclusion can be drawn that the knowledge function had a significant impact on purchase intention in both forms ( $\beta=0,521$  in text-based,  $\beta=0,796$  in visual-based,  $t>1,96$  in both cases). As for H5, the case of visual-based reviews did not have a more significant impact on purchase intention, although both forms were proven significant. Therefore, H5 is supported by the statistics gathered from the research, but in a reverse manner.

## **5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

This section of the paper will provide discussion and analysis of the findings of the research. The themes of this section are firstly general discussion and analysis, followed by more detailed discussions about the two objectives of this research. Lastly, various limitations of the research are presented, which can be taken into account in order to improve future research.

### **5.1. General Discussion and Analysis of the Findings**

This study researched prior literature in the field of consumer behavior and psychology to develop and test a conceptual framework regarding the functional attitude theory in two forms of electronic word-of-mouth: text-based reviews on review sites, e.g. Amazon and mostly visual-based reviews on social media, e.g. Instagram. This research was narrowed down to the industry of cosmetic products, and the study for primary data was specified furthermore to make-up products. Surprisingly, the research does not support most of the five hypothesis proposed in the literature review. Regardless, eWOM was found to have an impact on purchase intention of cosmetic products. The following chapters will present short summaries of the findings as well as provide analysis about each hypotheses proposed in the literature review.

In regards to susceptibility to interpersonal influences, it can be noted that the findings of the research imply that consumers generally consult their friends prior to purchasing in order to hear about their recommendations and personal experiences. In contrast, the findings propose that consumers do not commonly purchase cosmetics products solely based on the need to gain social acceptance from peers. These findings are interesting when considering the pressure of social influences and eWOM. A conclusion can be drawn, that consumer seek eWOM to gain information about its usability. Therefore, an assumption can be made that the knowledge function is often employed when considering online reviews.

### 5.1.1. Comparing visual and textual reviews

Initially, H1 was not supported by the research. Although the mean was slightly greater in general in text-based reviews rather than visual-based reviews, the influence of the form of eWOM was found statistically non-significant. This finding is not consistent with Erkan & Evans's (2016) earlier research, where they compared the impact of reviews on retail sites and social media and discovered that textual reviews on retail sites were more impactful. The mentioned authors learned that textual reviews on retail sites were more impactful due to the distinct characteristics they possess, such as information readiness and detailed information. In regards to the findings of this study, further studies ought to be conducted in order to comprehend why text-based reviews are not as impactful as proposed. An explanation could be the fact that human brain processes visual material 60,000 times faster than text (Margalit 2015). Moreover, visuals have also been proven more effective in *preventing* purchase intention in the form of warnings. For example, visual warnings on the sides of cigarette packets are proven more easily noticed and impactful (Fong et al. 2009).

The general finding in the research surprisingly is that visual-based eWOM, in this case representing reviews in social media, has a more significant impact on purchase intention of cosmetic products. In contrast, according to earlier research by Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006), customer eWOM on Amazon had a significant impact on purchase decision-process. A potential explanation to the findings of this research could be the constantly changing trends and consumer preferences, as the research was conducted a decade ago. As the popularity of social media is constantly increasing, the impact of eWOM on channels like Instagram, Twitter and various bloggers on young consumers is also growing. Visuals are becoming more of a norm rather than an exception when it comes to both advertisement and eWOM, furthermore causing text-based reviews to lose their power.

In addition, another explanation could be the subgroup the research was narrowed down to. Make-up products are easier to review and judge in visual formats, in comparison to e.g. skin care products. To be more specific, a consumer can easily see the characteristics and results of a mascara applied on eyelashes, whereas for e.g. face cream are not as easily reviewed in a picture. In terms of text-based reviews, the characteristics of a face cream can be assessed in more detail in writing. Therefore, the results could be dissimilar if another

product category had been chosen. However, another research of a larger scale could be conducted when considering improvements for future research.

Furthermore, as discussed in the literature review in section 2, studies have proved eWOM on retail sites to be less credible due to the fact that reviews are posted anonymously. According to Lin et al. (2012), consumers might discount the quality of text-based reviews as there is less personal liability caused by anonymity. Perhaps the credibility of visual-based reviews on social media is enhanced by displaying the reviewers face and other personal artifacts. In comparison, text-based reviews on retail sites do not necessarily reveal anything about the source. Therefore, some consumers may find text-based reviews doubtful and less trustworthy as they know nothing about the reviewer and could thence be deceived.

### **5.1.2. Analysis of Functional Attitudes**

Considering the overall findings from each functional attitude, a summary is presented below in table 17. Looking at the functional attitudes displayed in eWOM, the research does not directly support any of the H2 through H5. The primary data research conducted studied four different functional attitudes in two different forms of eWOM. Although six out of the eight construct were proven to have a significant impact on purchase intention, the two non-significant constructs were text-based. These findings correspond to those discussed in the previous chapter, which is on the contrary to the H1. In regards to H2 and the utilitarian function, the hypothesis was supported in a reversed way. Text-based reviews were found non-significant, and visual-based reviews on the other hand were found to have a relationship with purchase intention. Moving on to H3 and the ego-defensive function, the impact of eWOM was found equal and significant in both cases. Therefore, H3 was not supported by the research. Continuing to H4 and the value-expressive function, visual-based reviews were again found to have a greater impact in purchase decision. The research therefore does not support H4 as it proposed that neither forms of eWOM have a relationship with purchase intention. Concluding with H5 and the knowledge function, both forms of eWOM were found significant, yet visual-based eWOM had a slightly greater impact on purchase intention compared to text-based eWOM. This finding supports H5 in a reversed manner than proposed.

Function/Form	<b>Text-based</b>	Difference in impact	<b>Visual-based</b>
<b>Utilitarian</b>	Non-Significant	<	Significant
<b>Ego-Defensive</b>	Significant	=	Significant
<b>Value-Expressive</b>	Non-Significant	<	Significant
<b>Knowledge</b>	Significant	<	Significant

Table 16: Summary of the significance of impacts between forms of eWOM

Studying the four functional attitudes, a more thorough analysis can be done for each function independently. Firstly, utilitarian function was found to have a significant impact on purchase intention only when the review was visual-based. As defined in the literature review, utilitarian function refers to the idea that a consumer will make a purchase decision based on the greatest amount of utility, or happiness, received or vice versa. In addition, utilitarian function is also linked to performance. To provide an explanation as to why a visual-based review displaying the utilitarian function is significantly more effective, one must consider the benefits a consumer receives from the specific review. Perhaps a visual representation of a product's utilitarian characteristics is more convincing, since it displays the product's performance in more detail than a text-based review.

Considering the ego-defensive function, the findings of the study propose that the impact on purchase intention is significant in both cases. Looking back to the literature review, ego-defensive function is defined as the attitudes that serve to protect one's self-concept. A conclusion can be drawn, that consumers place great value on reviews that provide information about their perceived flaws. As discussed in section 2, many consumers use cosmetics in order to gain more confidence and to make them feel better about themselves. Therefore, it seems that it is important to not only gain knowledge about a product's characteristics, but also about what the purchase and usage of the product results in for the consumer.



In terms of the value-expressive function, the research found that the attitude displayed in the review had a significant impact on purchase intention only in the case of visual-based review. Based on the earlier literature, this function is employed when the attitude reflected in the review is based on the central values of the sender, i.e. author. In this research, the values reflected were revolving around animal rights. The findings imply that consumers are influenced more highly by visual representation. Perhaps pictures have a greater appeal on human emotions, thus resulting in a higher rate of purchase intention. To conclude, it seems that the association the make-up product would have on the consumer is important and noteworthy.

Lastly, looking at the findings regarding the knowledge function, a conclusion can be drawn that it is an influential function in both forms considering the objective of the research. As defined earlier, the knowledge function provides structure and organization about a product and its characteristics. An explanation for the palpable significance of this function could be the fact that consumers often look for fact-based knowledge, statistics and proven examples before making a purchase decision. Therefore, consumer's purchase intention is influenced more highly by employing this function.

## **5.2. Limitations of the Study**

There are some potential limitations to the study, which could be taken into consideration for future improvement. Perhaps the main limitation of the study has to do with the sample. As the size of the sample ( $n=155$ ) is relatively small, it does not necessarily give consistent and reliable results. This is especially problematic when considering the structure of the questionnaire, as there were eight different versions. The eight different sections of the questionnaire had around 16 to 26 responds each.

The second limitation to the study was socio-demographics. As the questionnaire was mainly intended for consumers interested in make-up products, the dominating percentage of female respondents was almost 97%. Thus, the results can not be extrapolated to the whole population, but must be limited to female consumers. In regards to future studies, the

research questions could correspondingly include male consumers to create more generalized results.

The third limitation to the study has to do with the method the empirical research was conducted. As the questionnaire was in an online form and the respondents answered the survey independently, there was no one to help them in case something was unclear. This could have been avoided by conducting qualitative interviews in stead of quantitative research, although the proposed method would have taken a lot more time and effort. In terms of future improvement, the online questionnaire could include several boxes marked as “other comments” where the respondent could write any notes or comments the researcher should take into account when analyzing the results.

The fourth and last limitation is in relation to the industry the study focused on. As the research needed to be narrowed down to a specific industry, the results cannot necessarily be extrapolated into eWOM in any other industries. The product reviews in the online questionnaire were all about mascaras. It cannot either be assumed that all respondents are interested in mascaras or familiar with the product. Considering future research, a more generic product category could be chosen in order to acquire more general results.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

To conclude this paper, the following chapters will include some final thoughts about the research. The chapter will discuss three main topics thematically. Firstly, main findings of the study are presented. Secondly, implications for international business are discussed. And lastly, suggestions for further research in the field of business are examined.

### **6.1. Main Findings**

The main findings of this research are firstly, visual eWOM in social media has a significant impact on purchase intention of cosmetic products and secondly, there are differences between the functional attitudes displayed in eWOM. The study also established that on the contrary to earlier literature, text-based reviews on retail sites do not necessarily have a greater significance on purchase intention. In addition, the research found that the two most effective functional attitudes mentioned in the review were the ego-defensive function and the knowledge function. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that consumers are mostly interested in reviews that firstly provide information about their self-concept and perceived flaws and secondly, provide information about the characteristics of the product. It seems that although cosmetic companies cannot directly influence what is said on the internet about their products, it would favor them to encourage their customers to engage in eWOM. As mentioned in the literature review, many companies are already actively taking advantage of this function by giving e.g. monetary rewards to customers as a compensation for sharing their thoughts on the internet. This could further be enhanced by allowing customers to accompany their product review with real-life pictures. In terms of social media, companies could benefit from engaging customers and their evaluations of products in their social media marketing strategies. Companies could do this e.g. by re-posting pictures and videos of their customers using and reviewing their products. Perhaps even the visibility a social media user receives from the company sharing their post concerning a product could be a sufficient enough reward to urge them to share their thoughts online.

## **6.2. Implications for International Business**

Around 90% of Finnish consumers of age 16 to 45 years using the internet daily are exposed to eWOM, regardless of whether they are in the process of decision-making. In regards to implications for international business, this research provides two matters. Firstly, it combines existing literature in the field of eWOM and consumer behavior and secondly, provides an insight to actual findings by conducting a quantitative research. The main implication for international business is the finding that visual eWOM has a significant impact on purchase intention. As discussed in section 6.1., cosmetic companies can therefore benefit from this knowledge by actively encouraging customers to share their experience and opinions of products with other internet users.

In regards to the functional attitudes, this research provides suggestions for marketers. The two functions that have the greatest impact on purchase intention regardless of the form of eWOM according to the research were ego-defensive and knowledge functions. This suggests, that marketers can potentially target these two attitudes to receive the greatest rate of purchase intention. As for the ego-defensive function, coming up with a simplistic rule of thumb for message strategy can be problematic due to the fact that consumers have varying self-images. Although some generic features can be identified such as fear of being lonely and pressure to look good, addressing such personal and intimate issues may be precarious. On the other hand, targeting a consumer's knowledge function is less ambiguous. Marketing campaigns containing fact-based material and real-life statistics can be effective against this function and therefore have a greater impact on purchase intention. Most of the advertisements in the cosmetics industry are already targeted at the knowledge function. This is done by e.g. presenting pictures of the results from using a specific product or statistics, e.g. "five times longer lashes" or "considerably softer skin in three days". Furthermore, although many cosmetics companies have integrated product reviews on their websites, these reviews seldom comprehend visual aids. Thence, according to the findings of this research, cosmetics companies could possibly increase sales by providing the possibility for customers to upload pictures alongside with textual reviews.

### **6.3. Suggestions for further research**

What comes to suggestions for further research, many limitations to this paper have been discussed in section 5.2.. Firstly, as trends and consumer preferences are constantly changing, the study for the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention should be ongoing in order to guarantee up-to-date results. Social media is coming more and more relevant for younger generations, thus the significance of visual-based reviews in social media may be increasing. In addition, there is potential for new forms of eWOM to appear as new technological advantages appear. These new forms should be researched and compared with other, existing forms.

Secondly, the framework should be tested on a much larger sample than in this research. The number of respondents in each of the eight versions of the questionnaire were too small to provide general results.

Lastly, as eWOM is somewhat dependable on the industry and products, the framework should be tested on other industries too, e.g. fashion industry. By doing this, the findings could become more generic and comparisons between the impacts of eWOM in different industries could be completed.

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## The purpose of this survey is to measure consumer attitudes towards online reviews of cosmetic products.

All responses will stay confidential.  
You may exit the survey whenever you feel like it.

\*Pakollinen

### Consumer attitudes towards eWOM

1. How old are you? \*

---

2. Choose your gender \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female  
☐ Other

3. Education level \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ Elementary school (peruskoulu)  
☐ High school graduate (lukio)  
☐ Bachelor's degree (kandi)  
☐ Graduate (maisteri)  
☐ PHD

4. What is your monthly income level? \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ Less than 1,000€  
☐ 1,001€-3,000€  
☐ 3,001€-5,000€  
☐ More than 5,000€  
☐ I'd prefer not to say

5. How often do you engage in social media? \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ Daily  
☐ Weekly  
☐ Monthly

**6. How often do you check online product reviews before purchasing a product? \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Almost always

**7. How interested are you in the latest cosmetics? \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all interested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very interested

Please choose the option that best describes your behaviour.

**8. I rarely purchase the latest cosmetic products until I'm sure my friends like them too. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**9. It is important for me that other people like the brands and products I purchase. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**10. I like to know which brands and products impress other people. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**11. When buying new products, I often purchase the ones I think others will approve of. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**12. I often observe which cosmetics my friends are using. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

13. I often ask my friends which brands and products they recommend before purchasing. \*
- Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

14. Choose your month of birth \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ January, February or March *Siirry kysymykseen 15.*
- ☐ April, May or June *Siirry kysymykseen 16.*
- ☐ July, August or September *Siirry kysymykseen 17.*
- ☐ October, November or December *Siirry kysymykseen 18.*

15. Choose your date of birth \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ 1.-15. *Siirry kysymykseen 19.*
- ☐ 16.-31. *Siirry kysymykseen 23.*

16. Choose your date of birth \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ 1.-15. *Siirry kysymykseen 27.*
- ☐ 16.-31. *Siirry kysymykseen 32.*

17. Choose your date of birth \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ 1.-15. *Siirry kysymykseen 37.*
- ☐ 16.-31. *Siirry kysymykseen 43.*

18. Choose your date of birth \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

- ☐ 1.-15. *Siirry kysymykseen 49.*
- ☐ 16.-31. *Siirry kysymykseen 54.*

**“This mascara provided a dark, sensual look without making my lashes feel heavy. My lashes also felt hydrated throughout the day and the product didn’t fall off. The mascara also has a very pleasant, floral fragrance. I feel very confident and satisfied when wearing this mascara.”**

Please choose the best alternative for each statement.

19. The review shows that the product would give me pleasure. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

20. The review shows that the product would ease my everyday life. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

21. The review shows that the product would bring me confidence. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

22. The review shows that the product would help me with my make-up routines. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Siirry kysymykseen 59.

Please choose the best alternative for each statement after reading the following review:

**“This mascara provided a dark, sensual look without making my lashes feel heavy. The mascara also has a very pleasant, floral fragrance. I feel very satisfied about purchasing this mascara.”**



**23. The review shows that the product would give me pleasure. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**24. The review shows that the product would ease my everyday life. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**25. The review shows that using the product would bring me confidence. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**26. The review shows that the product would help me with my make-up routines. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

*Siirry kysymykseen 59.*

**"I never used to get attention from men. After purchasing this mascara, I was constantly the center of attention at parties and I'm now dating a handsome male model. I also get a lot of compliments from people when wearing this mascara."**

Please choose the best alternative for each statement.

**27. The review shows that the product would make me feel less lonely. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**28. The review shows that the product would make me feel important. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree



3/18/2017

The purpose of this survey is to measure consumer attitudes towards online reviews of cosmetic products.

29. The review shows that the product would help me work through my personal problems. \*
- Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

30. The review shows that the product would increase my self-esteem. \*
- Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

31. The review shows that the product would make me feel better about myself. \*
- Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

*Siirry kysymykseen 59.*

Please choose the best alternative for each statement after reading the following review:

**"I never used to get attention from men. Nowadays I get a lot of compliments when I'm wearing this mascara. It really makes my eyes pop out like never before!"**



32. The review shows that the product would make me feel less lonely. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

33. The review shows that the product would make me feel important. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

34. The review shows that the product would help me work through my personal problems. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

35. The review shows that the product would increase my self-esteem. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

36. The review shows that the product would make me feel better about myself. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

*Siirry kysymykseen 59.*

**"Animal and human rights are both extremely important to me. This mascara has not been animal tested and is made of 90% organic ingredients. It's the best environmentally friendly mascara I have ever tried."**

Please choose the best alternative for each statement.

37. This review reflects the kind of person I see myself to be. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree



**38. This review helps me communicate my self-identity. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**39. This review reflects the kind of information I would like to receive. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**40. This review helps me express myself. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**41. This review helps me define myself. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

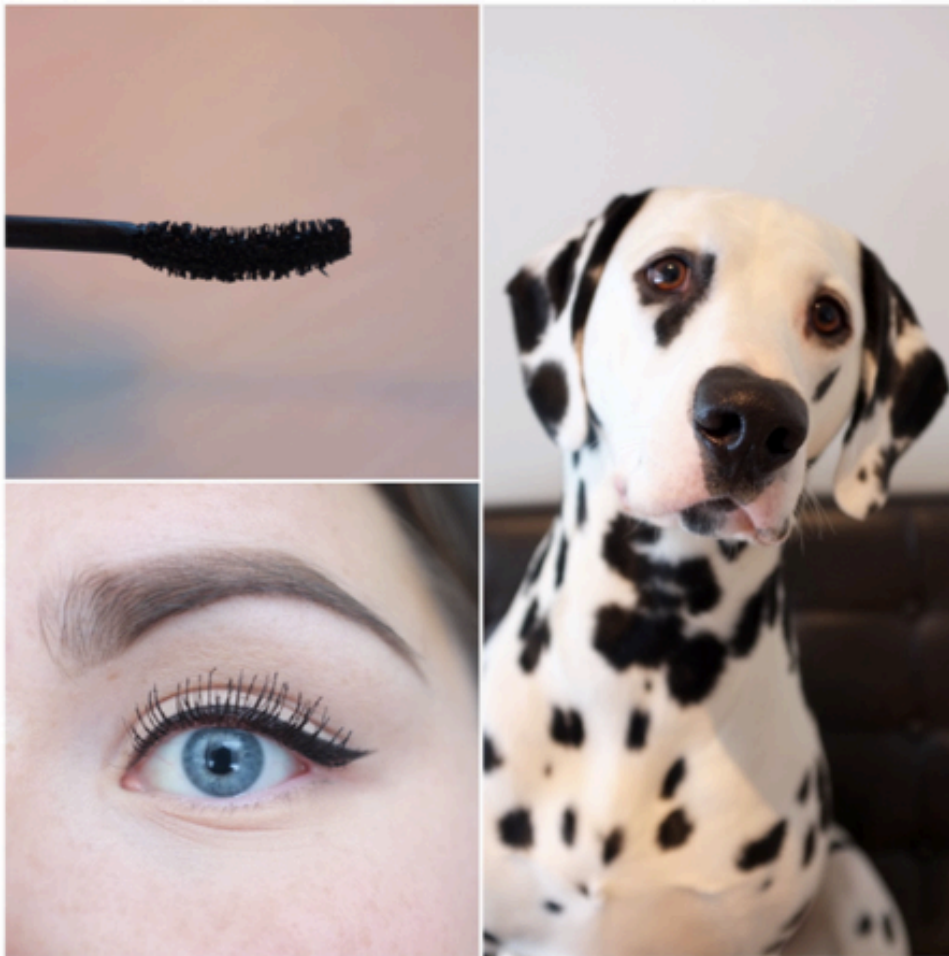
**42. This review expresses the values of the product to me. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

*Siirry kysymykseen 59.*

Please choose the best alternative for each statement after reading the following review:

**"I really value animal and human rights. This mascara is not animal tested and is also made of 90% organic ingredients. Its the best environmentally friendly mascara I've ever tried!"**



43. This review reflects the kind of person I see myself to be. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

44. This review helps me communicate my self-identity. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

45. This review reflects the kind of information I would like to receive. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**46. This review helps me express myself. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**47. This review helps me define myself. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**48. This review expresses the values of the product to me. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

*Siirry kysymykseen 59.*

**"This mascara is long-lasting and highly pigmented. The brush reaches my eyelashes in the inner corners of my eyes too. My eye lashes appear long and curly with this mascara, even after a night out. What a great value for money!"**

Please choose the best alternative for each statement.

**49. This review helps me understand the product. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**50. This review makes it easy to structure the characteristics of the product. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**51. I would be confused about the product without this review. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

3/18/2017

The purpose of this survey is to measure consumer attitudes towards online reviews of cosmetic products.

52. This review makes the product's characteristics more predictable. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

53. This review provides me with knowledge of the product. \*

*Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

*Siirry kysymykseen 59.*

Please choose the best alternative for each statement after reading the following review:

**"This mascara is highly pigmented and long-lasting. The brush reaches the lashes in the inner corners of my eyes too. My lashes appear long and curly like never before!"**



**54. This review helps me understand the product. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**55. This review makes it easy to structure the characteristics of the product. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**56. I would be confused about the product without this review. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**57. This review makes the product's characteristics more predictable. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**58. This review provides me with knowledge of the product. \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

**Purchase intention****59. How likely would you purchase the product after reading the review? \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not likely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

**60. How likely would you recommend the product to a friend based on the review? \****Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not likely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

**If you wish to take part in the raffle, please fill in your contact e-mail!**





61. Contact e-mail

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Palvelun tarjoaa

 Google Forms